

Historic, Archive Document

Do not assume content reflects current scientific knowledge, policies, or practices.

Resume
A 280.39
Ag 82

SERVICE

USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

U. S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE OFFICE OF INFORMATION · WASHINGTON, D.C. 20250

February 1967

JUN 21 1967

No. 38

RESEARCH REPORT

CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS

In Hot Water. A quick dip in hot water or a blast of hot air effectively kills decay organisms on 13 fruits and vegetables, USDA scientists find. It also protects Stayman apples and Anjou pears from scald, a mottling of the skin which makes them unattractive and hard to sell. The scientists, who are making it hot for the decay organisms, say this method is cheaper, safer and easier to use than chemical controls. Good results have been obtained with apples, blueberries, cantaloups, lemons, oranges, grapefruit, cranberries, peaches, raspberries, strawberries, peppers, sweetpotatoes, and mangos. For you, the consumer, it will mean better quality fresh fruits and vegetables--and perhaps at lower cost because marketing men will suffer less loss due to spoilage.

Puffed Potato Pieces. Au gratin potatoes in 13 minutes; potato salad in 5. It's not as impossible or as far away as you might think. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has developed a way to make quick-cooking dehydrated potato slices and cubes. The secret lies in shooting the pieces from a puffing gun. This makes them porous, so they can be readily dried and just as readily reconstituted. Explosion-puffed potato slices can be served as boiled potatoes or made into potato salad after simmering only 5 or 6 minutes. A three-minute simmer and 10 minutes more in the oven produces scalloped or au gratin potatoes.

Shocking Development. Orange trees in California are getting the shock of their lives. Scientists of the U.S. Department of Agriculture--working with those at the University of California--are sending jolts of electricity through the trees to get them to drop their fruit. For years, oranges have had to be picked from ladders because the fruit does not readily fall. Now, the scientist find, a charge of electricity will knock off the mature fruit and leave the green oranges on the tree to ripen. Use of electricity offers other interesting possibilities. For instance, **tree** growth may also be controlled by electricity--either speeded up or slowed down. But all this is far in the future, USDA researchers say. Considerable research will be needed before this process can be fully understood and employed in orchards.

Sweet Tooth Teasers. Baking for the boys in Vietnam? Try using honey in your recipes. It will keep cakes and cookies softer longer. And if it's candy you're cooking--fudge or fondant--honey will keep it from crystallizing. When substituting honey for sugar, deduct 1/4 cup liquid for each cup of honey used.



IN YARD AND GARDEN

Dreaming of a Green Lawn? You'll improve your chances of having a luxurious lawn if you plant a blend of grass seed rather than a single kind, USDA turf experts say. Should disease strike, it more than likely will hit only one variety--and you'll have the others to fall back on. Also, a blend of both fine-textured and coarse grass is often recommended for a new lawn. The coarse grass grows faster and provides ground cover until the finer grasses mature. If, however, yours is an already established lawn that only needs to be thickened--only one variety of seed should be used, the kind you wish to permanently establish in your yard.

Flowers in the Snow. You can add a touch of springtime to your yard--in mid-winter--by planting shrubs that bloom in the cold. Several ornamentals flower in winter, say U.S. Department of Agriculture plant scientists. The Chinese witch hazel, which produces fragrant yellow blossoms, is one of these. Relatively unknown, it grows as far north as southern New England. Or choose the winter sweet. It is even more fragrant and is a good planting near a doorway or garage. The winter sweet can withstand 0° temperatures. Then there's a winter jasmine from China. It's a tough plant that blooms 6 weeks ahead of the forsythia. Winter jasmine grows easily from cuttings and it can withstand -10 degree temperatures.

Pruning Without Shears. Bushier chrysanthemums, more compact forsythias and junipers It's possible--and without pruning. A new chemical has been developed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture that stops growth of the terminal buds of these plants. Properly applied, the new growth regulator produces branching growth and other desirable characteristics in these and other ornamentals. Still in the early stages of research, it's something to watch for.

INSECT WORLD

No Disclaimers. If a pesticide is registered with the U.S. Department of Agriculture--and all pesticides must be--it has been tested and found effective and safe when used as directed. Yet pesticide manufacturers frequently put disclaiming statements on their labels which say they are not responsible for the effectiveness or safety of their products--even if used as directed. No longer. "Such disclaimers," says Dr. Harry W. Hays, Director of the Pesticides Regulation Division of USDA's Agricultural Research Service, "are both false and misleading. They are not acceptable."

Fountain of Youth. A substance in the wood of balsam fir can be used to turn certain insects into big babies. Instead of maturing normally, the insects never become adults--and never reproduce. The chemical--a hormone-like compound called juvabione--could offer startling new opportunities for insect control, U.S. Department of Agriculture scientists say. So far, juvabione works well on boxelder bugs, linden bugs and mealworms. And since bedbugs and chinch bugs are of the same family, it may work on them too.

No Admittance. USDA plant quarantine inspectors recently broke up a friendship--between a member of a ship's crew and his pet grasshopper. The grasshopper belonged to a species that causes considerable crop damage in China and Japan. The inspectors wouldn't let the sailor bring the grasshopper into the U.S. (U.S. Department of Agriculture personnel are constantly on the look out for damaging foreign pests that might inadvertently enter this country and cause crop and livestock damage.)

AT THE SUPERMARKET

What's Plentiful. Still sticking to your New Year's resolution to shop more carefully for food? Then watch for these items--oranges, grapefruit, pork, eggs, canned salmon, dry beans and green split peas. The U.S. Department of Agriculture says they'll be in especially plentiful supply in February. In March--eggs, pork, oranges, grapefruit, green split peas and canned salmon will continue on the list, with eggs and peanuts and peanut products featured. Rice also appears on the March list of plentiful.

Everything But the Squeal. Homemakers--looking for something different to serve for dinner--should spend a few extra minutes at the meat counter. Most stores offer so many different cuts and forms of pork that you could serve it for two months without repeating. A U.S. Department of Agriculture survey shows an average of 24 different forms of fresh pork in city food stores. Take pork chops--there's rib, loin, shoulder, or boneless loin. You can buy 'em plain, smoked, butterfly, or cut extra thick for stuffing. Then there is an infinite variety of cured pork. For instance, consider all the different kinds of smoked sausages--the linked and the unlinked, the jumbos and the juniors, the mighty spicy and the lightly spiced. There's economy in variety--especially in pork during February and March.

For the Freezer. Two new frozen omelets have been developed by Cornell University's Agricultural Experiment Station. One, the Frozen Western, is made with eggs and ham; the other, a Frozen Catskill, contains smoked chicken. Each takes only 5 or 6 minutes to cook. Almost before the Cornell omelets were market tested (at restaurants and supermarkets in central New York State), several commercial companies brought out similar products. So you may find these new frozen foods already at your supermarket.

ON THE SKI SLOPES

Skiing. Looking for a place to ski? Look no further than the new directory of ski areas issued by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. It lists about 175 areas in National Forests, reports the types of ski lifts at each and whether accommodations are available for overnight guests. Also included in this full-color booklet are illustrations of the 12 standard national ski signs. The booklet advises, "Learn these signs and ski the National Forests safely." For a copy of this informative publication, send 30 cents for "Skiing" to the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402. Allow three weeks for delivery.

Schuss and Slalom. If you count the days and the number of visitors and multiply them together, you find that nearly half a million ski visits were made to the Tahoe National Forest in California in 1965--to make it the most popular of the 154 National Forests for winter sports. According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the actual tally at Tahoe was 484,700 visits. Second most popular ski area was the Wenatchee National Forest in Washington, which totaled 386,100.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Tools of the Trade. Colorimeter, micrometer, refractometer, salometer,--these are the behind-the-scene tools used by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to check the quality of food products as they go through the marketing system. They are used to assure you of really red tomato juice, high-standing egg whites, a certain sweetness of cantaloupes, grapes and honey, and just so much salt in your pickles. USDA graders use such tools to help classify products according to market value--and thus provide you, the consumer, with better quality foods.

ALL ABOUT SHOES

Under Foot. Worn out shoes may harm feet. Shoes with ripped seams or soles with holes should be repaired promptly, the U.S. Department of Agriculture says. But keep in mind that half soles and resoling may change the size or shape of the shoes and result in a poor fit. With rising shoe repair costs, it may be less expensive to buy new shoes for your child's rapidly growing feet.

New Shoe Sizes. A new system of sizing and fitting men's shoes--to reduce the number of sizes the retailer must stock--is being tried out by a major shoe producer in 450 retail outlets, reports a U.S. Department of Agriculture clothing specialist. The new sizes reflect the measurement around the ball of the foot rather than its width. Plans are underway to apply the system to women's and children's shoes, too.

Well Shod. How many pairs of shoes did you buy last year? If you are what USDA economists consider average, it was three pairs. But if you are a member of the fairer sex, you probably bought four. All of which means Dad and son got only three pairs between them.

LAUNDRY TIP

To Reduce Wrinkles. If you don't have a wash-and-wear cycle on your washing machine or dryer--yet want to use these machines for clothes made of synthetic fibers, try these suggestions from the U.S. Department of Agriculture. They'll help reduce wrinkling. Wash in small loads. Use cool or warm (never hot) water. Wash only long enough to remove soil. Rinse in cool water. Shorten the water extraction times--both after washing and after rinsing. Set dryer at low or medium. After clothes are dry, tumble them for 10 minutes more without heat. Remove immediately and hang.

FEEDING THE HUNGRY

Help Where It's Needed. Some kind of food assistance is available in many areas of the country to those who need it. It's part of the U.S. Department of Agriculture's effort to make good use--right here at home--of our abundant food production. Most widespread is the direct donation of a variety of foods to the disabled, unemployed, elderly and others who need food help. For information about food assistance in your community, contact the county or city welfare office.

Breakfast Is Served. Milwaukee, Wis., and Milton, N.C., may be miles apart geographically but they are together in the school breakfast program. These two towns were among the first to try this new pilot program authorized by the Child Nutrition Act of 1966. Both schools have on their rolls a large number of youngsters from low-income families--children who might otherwise wait until noon for their first meal of the day. Both now serve these children hearty breakfasts--a glass of milk; a half cup of fruit, or vegetable or fruit juice; bread, rolls, muffins or 3/4's of a cup of whole-grain cereal. Meat and other protein foods are served as often as practical. Before the year is out, some 100 public and private schools from coast to coast will participate in this experimental project. More than 100,000 youngsters from low-income families will eat breakfast at school.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write: Jeanne S. Park, Editor, SERVICE, Office of Information, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., 20250.